



Crisis Intervention 101: De-escalation Steps for Law Enforcement, First Responders and Everyone Else

Linda Flanders

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CRISIS INTERVENTION 101 In America, one in four people live with a diagnosable mental illness. Sadly, one in six of those people will have some contact with the police during their lifetime. Tragically, jails and prisons house ten times more people living with a mental illness as there are in hospitals. We want to change that. Mental illness is a brain disorder or chemical imbalance. It cares nothing for race, religion, age or gender. It doesn't matter if we're rich or poor, a brilliant mathematician or in special ed. It's simply another form of illness or injury that affects human beings. And, a mental health crisis is a medical crisis. A person needs help. Crisis Intervention 101 gives a simple overview of mental health and the calls first responders most often are called to; reasons why a crisis can happen, and offers basic understanding about how to verbally de-escalate a crisis. These skills are taught in a common sense approach, and are appropriate for law enforcement, emergency responders, school personnel and advocates. They can also be learned by anyone. They should be learned by everyone. Used across the nation, these de-escalation steps are a change to the traditional authoritarian model. Rather than giving orders, we learn how to "actively listen." The book uses pictures and short descriptions to show how to build a truthful and honest rapport with another person and how to offer options; allowing a person time to choose the best option under the circumstances. We all want to be understood. These are human communication skills and can be mastered by us all. Imagine the difference if we did. Imagine a world if we do. This basic book includes links to two accompanying videos. These short videos show an overview of a mental health crisis and examples of the verbal de-escalation steps in action. The book and videos are used in a crisis intervention advanced training designed specifically for rural law enforcement. The class is approved by Minnesota Police Officers Standards and Training (POST) for continuing education credits for law enforcement. It can be adapted for anyone who works with people in crisis. 50% of the proceeds from this book are donated to advocacy organizations: 25% to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) St. Croix Valley 25% to HOPE Coalition to end child abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence and homelessness.

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